

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 976. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 13, 1887.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

GRETCHEN.

By the Author of "Dams Durden," "My Lord Conscit,"
"Darby and Joan," "Corinna," etc.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER V.

"THE SECRET OF SILENT YEARS."

ACROSS the prison-court the fading light fell dim and wavering. Like one in a dream, Adrian Lyle noted it, and the dull hues of the sky, and the gloom of the long corridor into which he passed. So strange, so far away, so unreal, did everything appear that he seemed even to move by purely mechanical force, not by will or power of his own. A sound struck on his ear—the harsh, grating sound of a key in a lock. For a moment he felt the chill of a deadly fear, and shuddered from head to foot. Then the door fell behind him with a loud, sullen clang. The hand which till now had rested on his arm released its convulsive pressure. He saw before him a figure crouching with hidden face on a straw pallet; a figure indistinct and shadowy, on whose bowed head fell one faint ray of light from the narrow grating high above.

He could not move or speak, so great were the shock and the pain which seemed to come to him as at last he realised the horrors of Gretchen's surroundings. Breathless he leant against the door and watched the swift and silent movements of the woman whom he had brought to this dread place; a movement swift, impulsive, impassioned; yet not so swift or so impulsive as that which held her back and fenced her off with shuddering and repellent gesture; not so impassioned as the cry which rang out in the loneliness and silence of that miserable cell. Gretchen had sprung to

her feet, and, like a wild thing at bay, stood gazing at the figure trembling there in its agony of humiliation.

"Why are you here?" she cried at last. Her very voice was changed. Its sweet, rich music sounded harsh and discordant, and her face—oh, what a face it was which, like the wreck of every fair and joyous hope of youth, lifted itself among the chill, grey shadows, and, with despair beyond all words, spoke out its sad reproach! "Have you come to see your work?" she went on. "Why do you weep? You can't be sorry; you weren't sorry before, when I prayed to you for mercy and forgiveness."

"Oh, my child! my child!" burst forth in agonised accents. "Be merciful to me now. Every word of yours is like a sword thrust to my heart. I, at whose door lies this sin; I, who have deceived you all these years; I, whose life has been one long, long lie! Oh, forgive me if you can; forgive your guilty and unhappy mother!"

Frenzied hands clasped the girl's dress; wild tears streamed down the white up-lifted face. The shame, and fear, and passion of those burdened years, took vengeance now on their long repression, and wailed out their terrible secret in broken, incoherent words; words to which the child, so long denied all rights and care of motherhood, listened in hard and stony silence; words, at which the man, standing motionless against that closed door, unseen and unremembered, shuddered and grew sick at heart.

Humiliation so intense, remorse so terrible, had never met his eyes; the mother suppliant to the child; the guilty secret of the one life, bearing such tragic fruits in that of the other; and worst and most pitiable of all, was it to see how cold

and stern was that young face; how relentless the once sweet and radiant eyes. Stony, calm, and unmoved, she listened to the miserable tale which gave at last the clue to a lonely and unloved childhood; which showed the mother's sin repeated with yet more tragic horror in the child's young life.

The voice ceased. The shamed and stricken woman lifted her head, and, amidst the gathering darkness, looked with one last imploring prayer to the face above. What did she see in it? What did that silent watcher by the door see in it? For both, by one common impulse, sprang forward, and then, as if transfixed by mortal terror, stood—waiting. They could not have said for what—and yet it was less surprise than horror which fell with touch of icy dread on either heart, and kept them spell-bound, awestruck, still as death.

For across the silence there broke a laugh—a laugh more terrible than the very doom it foretold.

"My—mother!" It was only a whisper, but never trumpet-call could have sounded more awful and distinct to the listeners' ears. "My mother!" And again that low and foolish laughter echoed in the dismal cell; and the girl herself drew back and crouched against the wall, holding her hands out as if to keep off the approach of the poor suppliant. "You must not come near me," she said in the same hushed yet painfully distinct voice. "You do not speak the truth! My mother. Oh no—she is dead, dead and happy. A mother does not starve her child's heart; mine was starved and empty, and no one cared for me—until—ah yes, he cared. . . . How pretty the woods are! Let us gather the wild flowers; but you cannot see. You are blind—well—I will lead you. It is so sad to be blind."

Her voice broke over those last words: she raised her hands and looked at them, and then at the kneeling figure shaken with a storm of bitter weeping.

"Why do you cry?" she said. "Have you, too, killed your child? Do you see my hands?—there is no blood on them. They say there is. But it is only the earth, the dark wet earth . . . and the leaves. They were so cold . . . I wanted violets and daisies—my own name-flower which he loved and told me about in the spring woods. But there are no daisies now; and it is cold in the woods—oh so cold . . . I think sometimes that the earth is over me too, but it is not deep enough. . . oh, not nearly deep enough yet. You

must tell them to put more over me, or I cannot rest."

She ceased abruptly, startled by a cry which rang out through the darkness of the prison cell—the cry of a strong man's agony.

"Great Heaven! Not this fate too! I cannot bear it!"

He crossed the space between them with one rapid stride. He seized her hands, and his eyes were reading the havoc that these miserable days had made in the haggard face, the blank dull eyes.

"Gretchen!" he cried wildly. "Gretchen, don't you know me?"

She turned her eyes to his in the gathering gloom. Then they wandered away and rested on the figure by the pallet. A strange, foolish little smile came to her lips.

"Send her away," she said. "She is not my mother. I do not want her." Then she crept closer to his side as a child who seeks shelter and protection. "Is your heart warm?" she said in a half whisper. "Mine is so cold—oh, so cold. I think there is a stone there. . . I wanted to place it on the grave above the leaves and the earth . . . but I could not get it."

He dropped her hands and turned aside. Blinding tears filled his eyes. He could not see her face or anything else. It seemed as if the gloom and blackness of eternal night shut him out now from all that meant life and joy in a world barred by dreary prison-gates.

What had he hoped—what expected? Not this, he groaned in his heart. Anything—anything but this!

The woman at his feet arose. He could not see her face; the dusk had fallen rapidly; the last gleam of light from the dying day quivered and passed into the darkness of night; and the three, linked by such a chain of misery, stood side by side in that dreary cell, not speaking, scarcely even breathing; in each hand the cup of sorrow which Fate had willed that they should drink to its very dregs.

A sound of steps; the rattle of keys; Gretchen sank down again in the same attitude of dreary apathy. Not all Adrian Lyle's imploring words had drawn sign or answer from her lips.

When the turnkey opened the door, he summoned self-command to ask him of the girl's condition.

"Oh, she be right enough; she's only shamming," was the brutal rejoinder.

"Thinks, may be, that she'll get off easy. Bring her in 'temporary insanity,' you know. She's sensible enough when she likes."

Adrian Lyle shuddered with horror.

"For Heaven's sake," he implored, "be kind to her. She is so young, and has been delicately nurtured and cared for. To see her thus—in this miserable place——"

"Oh, as to that, I'll do what I can," returned the man more graciously. "'Tain't much as is allowed; but she wouldn't say anything as to who she was, or her friends, or aught o' that sort. Now I sees that she's respectable, we might move her to a better place, if so be you'd speak to the Governor, or, may be, you know one of the magistrates."

"No," said Adrian Lyle brokenly, "but I will call on one if you will give me his address."

"You can get that from the Chaplain. Perhaps you'd like to see him; and I suppose," he added, "you're a-going to have her defended. There's not much time to lose. Case is coming on o' Friday."

"Yes," he said hurriedly, "I will see to that."

The woman at his side pressed his arm. "Take me home now," she said faintly. "I cannot bear more. It is too horrible."

Anna von Waldstein was not a weak woman. Far otherwise, indeed. She had been accounted very proud, cold, stern, impassive all her life; denying to herself that softness and mutability of temperament which is essentially feminine; excusing no weakness, because displaying none; and as little inclined to be compassionate to misfortune as to be self-indulgent to error.

Brought up with a rigour that was almost harsh, she had known but one love in her childhood's days, the love of her twin-sister. That love had been an influence gentle and humanising to both, and in a great measure had served to atone for the absence of other affection.

There had come a shadow on its brightness once, but the gentler and more yielding nature had triumphed; true, staunch, and faithful as in the pledge of childish days it had vowed to be, that love had done battle for its gentle faith, and believed in its idol even when that idol had fallen in the mire and dust of a bitter shame.

Did the proud woman think of these things now, alone and keeping sorrowful

vigil with despair, whose leaden hand pressed hard and sore upon her aching heart? Ay, that she did, passing in sorrowful and remorseful review all that had come and gone since first in girlhood's innocence and heedlessness, she had listened to the voice of a tempter, who had wrecked her life and poisoned all her future.

She had not realised for some time what it was she had done. He had seemed so generous, so brave, so true; and then, at last, when she had learned the truth—even then she had blamed circumstances, not him, not her lover, with the frank brow, and the bold laughing eyes, and the music of love in his voice.

Then came that black and awful time when Death laid his hand upon her life, and her child's cry alternately lifted her soul to heights of joy and dragged it down to depths of horror and despair. During all that time—faithful still when all looked faithless—that tender sister's voice had sounded in her ears; had whispered of hope and of forgiveness; had rescued her from the deep, dark waters that were closing overhead—rescued, and restored her, and in pure love and infinite pity, had shown her a way of escape, which, safe and almost innocent then, now looked but one long network of black and heartless deceit.

Her mother had died, her father was old and infirm, failing in sight and sense. What more easy than to utilise the marvellous likeness which had always existed between them!—a likeness which sorrow and suffering had deepened, until now the two faces were but a reflex of each other, and would have needed a keen eye to detect the younger from the elder, though, indeed, seniority was but a question of hours.

Anna von Waldstein had listened, hesitated, and then finally accepted the sacrifice. She was in desperate case. Homeless, moneyless, with her child to support, and such a burden of shame upon her proud shoulders as even a stronger nature might have shrunk from bearing, how tempting looked the refuge offered. The home which, cold and loveless as it might be, was yet a place of shelter where none would know her shame, and where her child might be brought up under her own care.

The temptation had come to her again and again, urged by that faithful and self-sacrificing love, and at last hesitation ceased to parley; deception, boldly faced, looked less guilty.

Anna von Waldstein, the sinner, returned to her father's roof, bringing the tale of the erring sister's death, and demanding the shelter of that roof for the nameless orphan whom she had brought in her charge.

Marie von Waldstein, the innocent, entered a convent; and a year afterwards died, happy in the thought that her sister and her sister's child were safe, and the deception undiscovered.

The father had never suspected the cheat. The likeness between the two girls had always been so great that it had been very easy for Anna to identify herself with Marie, and, though a mother's keen eye might have read the subtle difference, the father, cast in harsh and sterner mould, failing in health and less keen of vision, never thought of questioning it.

Never could it have entered his head that a plot so daring, yet so simple of execution, could have been carried out so boldly under his very roof; and Gretchen, though denied all motherhood, yet grew up under a mother's care, knowing nothing of the love which was so sternly and harshly repressed, and ignorant of the dread and horror which surrounded her young years, and made every look, and smile, and question a thing of torture to that proud and suffering heart.

But a day came when the fabric of deceit so skilfully erected threatened to crumble in the dust. When eyes, long watchful and cruel in their silent suspicion, at last read the secret plainly enough, and boldly taxed Anna von Waldstein with the deed for which she had almost ceased to fear discovery. There had been no questioning, no hinting, nothing but a bold assertion of facts, skilfully put together, carefully evolved, and at last complete.

Gretchen was but a year old when Anna von Waldstein learnt that her secret was in the hands of the stern and rigorous Sister whose iron hand had ruled her childhood, whom she hated, and feared, and yet obeyed, because the exaction of spiritual submission is the one creed which the Church of Rome most rigorously enforces; and this submission, wound lightly as a thread about her childish years, became in after-life a chain which fettered her limbs, and ate into her flesh, and turned every hour of existence to martyrdom and dread.

The truth once guessed, she was bidden to reveal it to her own confessor, and these two had never ceased to make her sin a living torture, and her child its hourly penance.

Not in any moment of self-forgetfulness could that most wretched mother hold her child to her heart, or breathe one word of the love which at times threatened to overflow the barriers of restraint. No natural affection, no tender words, no sunshine of secret and gentle sympathy had brightened the long, long road she had been forced to travel. What wonder that that proud veil of silence and indifference was drawn yet more closely round the stately figure; that nothing was left for the child to reach or claim, nothing that could bring them heart to heart in any hour of sorrow or compassion? Nothing, nothing, nothing!

Anna von Waldstein remembered all this now, and shuddered as the cold, dark hours dragged heavily along. The innocent had indeed suffered for the guilty. The agony of her soul was such that she would have welcomed death but too gladly, yet no such mercy could be hers. Beyond all hope, beyond all help, so looked her life hence-forwards—dragging its guilty secret to the end, and beholding, afar off, yet near enough for dread unspeakable, the yet more terrible fate which she had called down upon her child's innocent head.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRAIN GROWS HARDER.

So fast had event crowded on event, so quickly had one calamity but foreshadowed another, that Adrian Lyle had scarce given a thought to the gravity of the charge against himself, a charge which he must answer, or else accept as a stigma of indelible disgrace.

He knew well enough the hand which had dealt it; the lips which had framed the lies repeated to his face by Alexis Kenyon; and he found himself inwardly wondering why Bari hated him so bitterly, and what his object could be in maligning his character as he had done.

That wonder brought back in some dim fashion the memory of that night in Venice, when the man's face had awakened a recollection in his mind too vague and undefined to be at once determined—a recollection which had escaped him again and again, but to which Bari's malignity now lent a certain force and importance which claimed his notice even amidst the sufferings and dread that had fastened upon his very life. Yet even now, on this terrible night, a night that had taxed his energy and self-control to the very utmost, he pushed aside

the matter which concerned himself, and gave up all his time, and thought, and consideration to Gretchen's service.

He had seen the magistrate, who had committed her; the chaplain of the gaol, who had endeavoured, though vainly, to gain any clue as to her name, or friends. From both he had heard the same story.

She had been found by a labourer, going to his work in the early morning, in a little lonely wood on the outskirts of the town. She was standing by a little mound of earth, scattering leaves over it in a dazed and mournful way, "like so as if she were daft," the man had said. He had watched her for some moments surprised at her strange occupation. Then she looked up and saw him, and immediately hastened away, "quite scared-like," to use the man's words again. Impelled by curiosity, he had approached the place, and turned over the wet earth and the damp, dead leaves with his boot, and there buried beneath, and wrapped in some fine white linen—part of a woman's underdress—was the body of an infant. It was quite cold, and very, very small.

The man, horrified by the discovery, took the child in his arms and followed the woman. He overtook her on the high road leading to the town. She seemed very ill and weak, and, when he showed her the child, was well-nigh overwhelmed with terror. He bade her come with him, and went straight to the police station and gave notice of his discovery.

The woman had said nothing. No one could get a word from her, but the evidence was so strong that she had been committed to prison on the charge of suspected child-murder, while enquiries were being made as to her name and circumstances.

There was to be an inquest on the body of the child the following day; the medical evidence would decide as to whether it had lived after its birth; there were no marks of violence, and it was possible the little creature had come by its death naturally; and the poor young mother had made its grave in this strange fashion: but all this was conjecture. In any cases, the circumstances were grave enough and serious enough to necessitate a trial; and the magistrate intimated that it would be as well for Mr. Lyle to secure a clever counsel to defend the girl if he was interested in her, and mentioned the name of a barrister, celebrated for criminal cases, whose address he gave the young clergyman.

It was nearly two o'clock when Adrian

Lyle took his way back to the hotel. He felt weary and exhausted; he had tasted no food since the morning, and he had undergone mental torture sufficient to try the strongest nature.

The whole weight and burden of this terrible affair was on his shoulders—the man to whose cowardice and selfishness this poor child owed her ruin, was far away from sight or knowledge of it. He, whose guilt had laid the foundation-stone of a tragedy so fearful; whose place, in common justice, should have been beside the poor, distraught creature in her dreary cell; he, alone, suffered nothing, knew nothing.

Little wonder that Adrian Lyle lifted up his white and haggard face to the clear and starlit sky, with an inward wonder at the callousness of Heaven, the pitilessness of Fate; little wonder that, in this sad hour of hopelessness and overwrought feeling, all the cynical truths, the cruel doubts, the hard and undeniable facts which of late he had listened to, and reasoned against, should return to his mind clear and cold as the voice that had uttered them.

The subtlest temptings ever come when the mind and body are at their weakest. Ghastly shapes of sorrow and despair crowded round him now; sad, dead eyes of tortured human creatures looked back through mists of darkness which had shrouded death-beds; prayers appealed to him; voices besought him; and the anguish of the dying and afflicted cried wildly out against their doom and shrieked within his ears: "Your God is not love, but hate; pitiless, unsparing, relentless—a phantom of man's creating, to whom they vainly cry."

He paused in the quiet and deserted street, and—so it seemed to himself—for one mad, ungoverned moment, threw open the portals of his soul, the inner and secret workings of that spiritual life to which he had striven to be true through sad and toilsome years. What had he gained?

Even in his worst days—his eager and impulsive youth—he had been essentially a religious man, believing in the God of the Christian creed, and seeing in Him all that was most sacred, and perfect, and divine. Zealously and fervently he had lived up to the vows he had made, and the profession he had accepted. No whitened sepulchre was he; no living lie or mask of holiness. What he had believed he had taught; what he had

vowed he had carried out in the face of all obstacles. But now—the thought came to him, falling straight and clear as falling star from the Heaven on which his eyes were fixed—"What if that Heaven were but a dream, and the Godhead it enshrined naught but a beautiful conception, poetic and sublime, but with no more reality or substance than the vision of a poet's fancy, self-created, mythical, and with but a shadow's transient existence?"

Was man ever conscious—fully and entirely conscious—of that far-off and fully-adored Divinity? Did not science and phenomena contradict the strength of the most perfect Faith? Did not Nature and Humanity alike declare, "The grave is all, and end of all"? Who has come back from thence to give us assurance of the Beyond, that we call immortal? Prayer, suffering, sacrifice, self-denial, what did they all come to? What evil could they avert? What destiny could they change? None, none; so moaned the voices of the night within his ear! None, none, so cried his own despair, rising like the waves of an ever-deepening sea, to drown for ever and for ever the hopes he had held, the Faith he had taught, leaving no foothold for failing steps, no straw for clinging hands, mighty as Sin and terrible as Suffering, those twin-gods who rule the whole groaning, travelling world where Humanity finds its dwelling.

The state of moral tension became intolerable. It was too much for any mortal powers. He felt his brain growing dizzy, a deadly faintness crept over his frame. With one feeble effort for strength and composure he staggered on a few steps, then threw his arms out blindly to the darkness that closed him round, and fell heavily forwards, without sound or cry, at the feet of a man advancing rapidly towards him.

The stranger paused, startled, and not a little alarmed; then bent over the prostrate figure, and turned the face towards the light that streamed from the hotel-doors.

A cry of horror and dismay left his lips: "Great Heaven, it is Adrian Lyle! How came he here?"

The speaker was Sir Roy Kenyon.

A CRETAN MONASTERY.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

DINNER was served in the great refectory for Michaelis and myself alone. A vase had been filled with flowers and put in the

middle of the table for adornment; and their colour, together with the crimson patches of light on the flagged floor, were effective details in a scene that was highly picturesque. The crimson light on the floor was wrought by the sun shining through the decanters of the ruddy monastic wine.

Our meal was as frugal as was right, considering that we were in the very middle of the great fast, and we were waited on by the servitor, book in hand, who, in a low tone, conjugated to himself the indicative mood of the verb "être," with a side-glance at me now and again to see if I were shocked at his pronunciation. Michaelis was provided with a plateful of boiled snails in large speckled shells, and some cabbage material to eat with them. But, had he been about to sit down to a Lord Mayor's feast, he could not have made a more genial obeisance to the papas before beginning his dinner.

As for the Hagia Triadha wine and the Hagia Triadha honey, they were both excellent, and the papas were very gratified to know that I thought so. The wine was home-made, and not very far away from the windows of the refectory was the spacious cemented tank in which they crushed their grapes in autumn by trampling them with their hard feet in the old-fashioned way. In truth, the monastery wine was so good and so strong that when we had drunk as much as was good for us, I was glad that we had a pretext for rising. Michaelis was to return to his wife and family that evening, when I had done with him. But, before returning, he was to escort me over the Akrotiri mountains to a remote little church cut in the rock, famous for the romantic solitude and sublimity of its situation, and for a stalactite cavern in the bowels of the mountain close by. When I add that this cavern has been mentioned in a paragraph with the grotto of Antiparos, it will show that it was a remarkable one.

We set off anew therefore as soon as dinner was over, taking with us two of the boys of the monastery as guides.

For an hour we fought our way through the ground-shrubs, the dwarf holly, scrub-caroub, and arbutus, which grew in dense thickets on the rocky slopes of Akrotiri's beautiful peaks. It was a delicious afternoon. The White Mountains in the distance had a golden tinge upon their snow, and there was a golden haze over the country which etherealised, but did not

obscure it. Then we entered the defiles by which we were to gain the seaward side of the hills without toiling over them.

The boys were in the gayest of spirits, singing Greek hymns and ballads in melodies as impetuous and erratic as the temperament of the modern Greek. But when we were in the gloomiest and narrowest part of the defile, where the red rocks rose precipitous on either hand, one of them abruptly stopped in his chant, and bounded aside to a part of the cliff which was scored with certain signs and crosses. Here, it seems, in the last insurrection, the Turks came upon eight Cretan men, and cut their throats like so many sheep. There was no escape for the victims: Nature had securely cooped them as if for slaughter, and their bodies lay in a heap until the monastery sent and fetched them away. Michaelis and the two boys told the tale with much ferocious pantomime and flashing of eyes.

From this tragic spot we ascended to a small mountain plain, environed by the rounded summits of the Akrotiri range. Under any but a southern sky the surroundings would have seemed bleak in the extreme. In the midst of the plain was a square, white-walled enclosure, with towers at each corner, and a white building at one side. A few fig trees and almonds grew by the walls, and some sheep were feeding within the enclosure. This was the monastery of the Hagios Joannis, a place of infinite calm and quietude. The points of the White Mountains just shone over the "arête" of the defile by which we had approached the monastery, and gave an added charm to this lonely building.

We rang the bell at the portal of the Hagios Joannis, and immediately afterwards a large, slipshod papá, with hanging cheeks, opened the door and invited us inside. The Grotto of Katholiko, whither we were bound, was in the district of this monastery, which, therefore, had the monopoly of supplying the candles necessary for its exploration.

The courtyard of the Hagios Joannis was a radiant little oasis of colour. Orange trees were there laden with fruit; geraniums covered with blossom towered far above our heads; carnations sweetened the air, and many another flower helped the carnations. A fountain of delicious water flowed in the midst of this little Paradise.

The boys forthwith slaked their thirst at the fountain-head, and I was for following their example, when they stopped me, and, with a wink of cunning, observed

that the papá should be asked for coffee. I said, "No;" but it was done in the twinkling of an eye, in despite of me. And for a few minutes we sat down on some suspiciously unclean divans in a small bare room opening from the courtyard. Two papás kept life warm in each other at the Hagios Joannis; visitors were rare indeed; one could therefore forgive the good ecclesiastics a certain slovenliness in their appearance and a certain oddity of conduct, both of which were, no doubt, induced by their exile from society.

We were drinking our coffee, which the one papá had made and the other served, when a stately cock stalked into the room, and chuckled with pride and affection at sight of the papá, between whose stalwart legs it sought for grains on the hard earth floor. The next minute in came a hen also, with her neck stretched forth in anxiety, and a look of care in her bright eyes. But the burly papá who had welcomed the cock rose hurriedly when he saw the hen, and with harsh noises and a waving of his arms, expelled her summarily. Then he returned to his seat and apologised for the scandal. Thrice the hen essayed to enter, and thrice the papá drove her forth. But at the third attempt patience was exhausted, and with angry mutterings both the papás set upon her, captured and pinioned her, and conveyed her to a little chamber apart, where, notwithstanding her screams and wails, she was shut in solitude. The petted cock all the time had stood with quivering comb, and seemed to approve these outrages by a low cooing sort of sound, and a quiet tossing of the head. Why this antagonism for the hen, and affection for the cock? I asked, when peace was restored. And then, with bated breath, the big papá observed that, to the best of their knowledge, the hen was the only feminine thing within the monastery walls, while with the cock it was otherwise. I suppose the papá imagined that he was transgressing the monastic rules by giving the poor hen the run of the conventual establishment when they were alone; for at Mount Athos no female dog, cat, or fowl is allowed to be received.

Well supplied with candles, we now continued our climb over the hills, until the blue Levant was before our eyes. Then, by a steep path and several score of steps cut in the rock, from the side of which was a perpendicular fall of a hundred or a hundred and fifty feet, we descended carefully

to the end of a mountain gorge, where the remains of buildings and the gaping mouth of a cavern showed that we were at the deserted shrine of Saint Katholiko. In times past this was a populous retreat; but now, except once or twice in the year, when a *pará* makes pilgrimage hither, and sleeps for a night or two in the damp rock-hole by the side of the chapel, it is wholly abandoned. A fig tree, twenty feet high, grew from the heart of one roofless building, testifying, in a measure, to the time of its desertion.

Of the Katholiko Grotto let it be enough if I say that we explored it until we could stand the heat no longer. From chamber to chamber we clambered over the rock boulders, slippery with the constant drippings from the superincumbent mountain mass, with monstrous stalagmite columns on both sides of us. Some of these latter were as thick as a man's body, and firmly fastened to the base of the cave; while myriads of others, in earlier stages of their growth, sparkled under the fantastic flicker of our torches. One chamber in particular was remarkable for its Gothic architecture. We entered it by a difficult ascent and an awkward twist between two huge stalagmites; and the boys placed themselves so that their more distant illuminations cast a suggestive halo over us and our surroundings. We seemed involved in a maze of sparkling shafts, from which it were almost impossible to unravel ourselves, without the aiding thread of some modern Ariadne. But, as I have said, the heat was insufferable, and we were literally streaming with perspiration when we reached the mouth of the cave once more.

My attendants went straightway from the grotto to the little church in the rock adjoining it, and offered their candles before a faded painting of the Madonna, which they first of all reverently kissed.

This church is some thirty feet long by fifteen, with a low, domed roof. Its natural walls were thick with green mould; its floor was littered with the refuse of sheep; and, on every available article within it (altar pictures, candlesticks, shrines, and panels) were multitudes of initials, Greek and Latin, with dates going back scores of years. From the rude porch of the church one looked up towards the Akrotiri summits, sparsely covered with wild olives and caroubes, down to the deep ravine of the gorge trending seawards, and out at the Levant itself, stretching to the horizon, as blue in colour as the sky over our heads. The seclu-

sion was absolute: we seemed to be at the back of the world.

Another cavern had to be visited on our return walk. This is known as the Cave of the Bear, from the similitude to a bear "couchant," of a huge isolated rock in the middle of the spacious and lofty cavern. This "bear" has been turned to account somewhat craftily. From the rocks overhead incessant drippings of pure spring water upon the bear's head, have worn a dainty basin therein. This, in turn, by overflow, has dug a hole in the animal's back. But for the further reception of the water elsewhere a great cistern has been excavated under the nose of the animal, and this, fed by the discharge from the statue, is perpetually filled with a supply of the sweetest water in the world. One might ask of what use is this water, where there is no man to be profited by it? But in Crete every cavern is registered in the minds of the Christians, as a possible and safe hiding-place from the Mussulmans in case of need; and many of the more complex and secure of these hill resorts have given shelter for months at a time to scores of Cretan women and children, thus put out of the way and temptation of the intolerable Turk. Here also in a recess by this cave is accommodation for a *pará*. A filthy straw mattress, an oil-lamp, and some bits of rags: this seems to be the sum of the fixtures which a *pará* requires for his night's comfort in this awful abode of rheumatism.

The sun was sinking when we again set foot in the monastery of the Hagia Triadha, and the excruciating chant of the *parás* in their church broke the still air. Michaelis was ready to return to Khalepa; but, before going, he wished to join in the service for awhile. We entered the lighted building, therefore. Eighteen *parás* were present in their robes and head-gear, and a couple of little boys composed what by a euphuism may be termed the choir. Save Michaelis and myself, no one unconnected with the monastery was present.

It were presumptuous for a native of a land where religious ritual is disfavoured by the sober reason of the majority to pass sentence on the florid and, as they seemed, trivial details which composed the service in this Greek monastery. But there was certainly much to excite a stranger's curiosity in the quaint homeliness of the conduct of the *parás* among themselves; in the singsong style of their readings; the absence of music proper; the crude

colours of the pictures on the altar screen, the illumined vermillion and gold of which were in the hardest contrast with the unlit nave of the church where the shadows of night were fast taking possession; and the remarkable flow of the "Kyrie Eleisons" from the mouth of the little boy, who for a time held the attention of the ministrants. Once this boy stopped, as if for breath; but a sharp word from one of the papás made him take up his parable again, though the apparent look of reproach in his eyes ought to have gone to the heart of the man. Towards the end of the service, Michaelis interrupted it for a moment to shake hands all round and depart homewards. A few minutes afterwards the lights were extinguished, the papás smiled with one accord, and began a familiar conversation, and two of them linked their arms in mine and led me out into the courtyard. They were all in the best of humour, judging from appearances.

One of my companions proved to be the Papá Elias, and, as if he sympathised intuitively with my wishes, he guided us to the cloisters where I supposed the Papá Theodosios was lying ill. With many a kind word and exhortation, they led me on to an open corridor, whence we could see the early stars shining already, and hear the falling water of the fountain below. Then they tapped at a door, and the next moment I stood in the nest sacred to the person of my friend, the Papá Theodosios.

I was delighted to find that the good papá was not seriously ill after all. He had hurt his foot with a pitchfork or something of the kind, and had besides a trifling ventral disorder; otherwise, he was in excellent health and spirit. His welcome, indeed, was of the warmest. His fine, fat face flashed with nervousness and excitement; he shook my hand again and again, as if to help him to regain his equanimity; and for the time he seemed unable to satisfy his hospitable desires. But all in the minute, he had opened a private cabinet by the foot of his bed, taken thence a black bottle of rum, uncorked and smelt it, and sent one of my attendant papás in quest of some tumblers. No doubt the Papá Theodosios had been recommended to take rum for the good of his stomach, and his sense of courtesy forbade him to drink such toothsome medicine alone.

Of the papá's sanctum, little need or ought to be said, except that it was singularly characteristic of a man of war as well as of a man of peaceful profession. An

ugly pistol surmounted his bed head, and the pistol was set off by two long guns. For the rest, there was as much dust and dirt as one usually finds in a room unblest by the untiring hands of woman; and I am sorry to say that the Papá Theodosios nurtured many fleas in the midst of his furniture of trifles.

The papá who had gone for the glasses was so long absent that the Papá Theodosios was for sending the Papá Elias in search of him. But in the nick of time he returned, followed by five or six other papás, and with them the servitor, who kept his place in the French Grammar with his forefinger and thumb. Caps were thrown pell-mell upon the Papá Theodosios's bed, everything available for sitting was brought forward, and very soon there was such a turmoil of happy talk and laughter that one had to shout instead of converse in the ordinary tone. This noise of conviviality drew other papás into the room, and these, finding no other space for them, tumbled themselves on to the bed with little or no regard for the invalid's comfort.

I believe that the Papá Theodosios would like to have cleared his room of all its occupants save two. They had come uninvited, and come at a critical time. Had he not brought out the rum, all the inmates of the monastery might have crowded into the room and been welcome. As it was, every one had to taste the rum, and as a consequence, the bottle was soon emptied, and the Papá Theodosios looked blue and became taciturn. But I humbly crave the papá's forgiveness if I wrong him. He did his best to entertain us with photograph albums and books, the contents of which he knew nothing about, and with me, at any rate, he was amiability itself. But when it began to wax late, and the owls began to drone outside, and one could not but think of supper, the servitor, who ought to have been in the kitchen, put an end to our assembly. With his lips apart, he stepped timidly to the front, and was about to request some information on two or three puzzling points in the Grammar when, with one accord, the papás rose upon him in a hubbub of indignation. They even expelled him from the room with contumely, and by some strange influence the rest of us felt constrained to follow the poor student down the stairs, after wishing the Papá Theodosios "good night."

Supper, it appeared, was already waiting

for us in the refectory. A table was spread in the corner for the Hegúmenos and myself; the other papás were to share among themselves the cold comfort of the spectacle. So at least I thought when we began our meal; but ere long it proved to be otherwise. As the spirits of the Hegúmenos rose under the cheering influence of his own good wine, he invited papá after papá to approach and drink a glass, or take a snail, or a little fish, or a long thin radish pulled from the monastery garden. As a result of this, the supper laid for two was irregularly shared among twelve or fifteen, and the decanters of wine were replaced several times by the doleful servitor. Out of pure good nature, I went so far as to offer the Papá Elias an egg, having remarked that he had abstained from rum in the bed-room of the Papá Theodosios. But I was fairly humiliated by the chorus of disapprobatory sounds, and gestures with which my offer was met. "What! eat an egg during Sarakosté (Lent)! Maria, keep us from such wickedness!" So said the Papá Elias himself, with a frown which made him look transcendently ugly.

However, though they would not eat much, I was greatly astonished at the drinking capacities of the papás. There was no other service in the church that night: this was well; but one could not help wondering how their heads would feel when they rose, in the early hours, for the first of their ceremonies. They threw off all restraint, and clinked my glass one after the other with the rollicking vehemence of so many Bacchanals, shouting: "Egeia!" "Salut!" (your health!) or "Kalo katevodi!" (good journey!) until I gave up the attempt to respond severally to each individual civility, and took to nodding and sipping indeterminately. Nor was the Hegúmenos a whit behindhand in joviality. He seemed indeed to enjoy the fun hugely, and laughed uproariously at this or that papá whose filmy eyes, red face, looseness of attitude, or incoherence of speech marked him as a man who had taken one glass more than he could carry with grace; and he was as pleasantly officious in trying to make the stranger drunk (I cannot help saying it) as any of them.

This wild riot continued until within half-an-hour of bed-time. And when, at length, the table and wine were deserted, each papá chose his favourite seat on the divans which lined the room, and, dragging his chair with him, lounged comfortably on

the cushions, and tilted the chair for the convenience of his resting feet. Cigarettes were lighted, and talk of a soberer kind ensued, though two or three of the papás now and then gave vent to their lightness of heart in a ringing burst of laughter.

In brief, one could almost believe that Master Rabelais would find himself very much at home and amused in a monastery like that of the Hagia Triadha.

My impressions of the papás and their domestic life was so pleasurable up to the time of going to bed, that I am sorry it was somewhat leavened by dissatisfaction in the night which followed. The servitor conducted me to the guest room over the refectory, which it equalled in length and breadth, and with a gentle "bon soir, monsieur," left me to my fate. And truly, for a man who loves clean linen and solitude during the dark hours, no experience could be less enjoyable than mine until cock-crow the next morning. There were six beds in the dormitory, and, after much deliberation and doubt, I chose that which seemed the least dirty. But I shall long remember the Hagia Triadha fleas, and the fever of unrest of that night.

In due time, however, day broke with sweet tranquillity, and I left my bed to its earlier occupants. From my row of windows I could see the White Mountains already gleaming under the sunlight, and the vines, the long grass, the barley patches, and the blossoms close at hand sparkling with dew. No bell had called the papás from their beds, but long ago they had all been up, all save the Papá Theodosios, and engaged in one or other of the multifarious employments which make the pastoral and religious life in combination so good for the body and mind of man.

I stepped from my room on to the inner corridor of the monastery. The sun had warmed the quadrangle thus early. By the portal of the building a knot of little scholars in blue gowns were conning their lessons with a low continuous murmur. The two or three old gentlemen who had delighted me yesterday in their gala dresses, were to-day sleepily sunning themselves by the orange trees, in the rags and tatters of mendicants; and birds were singing among the trees within and all over the land outside the monastery.

Returning, I found the servitor waiting for me. He was certainly a good lad, and well furnished with that endowment of veneration for others, which Mr. Ruskin

holds to be so worthy an attribute in a man or a boy. I expressed a wish to wash, and he did his best for me, though he seemed to think that I was over-particular. He fetched an article like an antique coffee-pot, and with this he poured bracing spring-water upon me till I told him to stop. When this was finished he brought me an early meal of Turkish delight and coffee, and murmured a few words of French, with a wry look over his shoulder to see that he was not observed. It was good, in conclusion, to see the light of gratitude in his eyes when I told him to persevere with the Grammar, and not be deterred by the jealousy of his more ignorant seniors.

I have nothing more to say about my visit to the Hagia Triadha. There was much hand-shaking when I left. The Hegúmenos received my dole "for the good of the Church," and gave me a pink rose in return; and then, accompanied through the olive woods by my friends, the Papás Elias and Constantinos (carolling like one of the birds on the olive twigs), I walked back over the breezy sunlit plateau of Akrotiri to Khalepa by Canea.

SOUTH AFRICAN SKETCHES.

SNAKES.

"THAT story ain't bad," said the one-eyed man, joining unasked in our conversation, "but I could tell you one worth two of that, about another kind of snake."

We were at the bar of the "Blue Posts," New Rush, Diamond Fields, taking some light alcoholic refreshment before retiring to our tent to turn in for the night, and I had just been narrating to my partner, D—, an adventure which I had had with a puff-adder at Camps Bay. As the adventure itself had not been remarkable for exciting passages of thrilling interest, I had largely drawn upon my imagination to supply these deficiencies; and I flattered myself that I had described a situation so full of astounding and unexpected incidents, and so nearly verging upon the impossible, as to defy competition. I consequently looked incredulously at this one-eyed digger, who was offering to tell a story worth two of mine.

The few men still in the bar—for the night was late for the early hours we kept at the Fields in those days, and who had been hanging with bated breath upon my lips, while I told them how I got the puff-

adder out of the leg of my trousers, into which it had wriggled while I was asleep—with the proverbial fickleness of the mob, now turned from me, and dressing their faces in set expressions of the keenest interest, called upon my rival to "go ahead" and "fire away." A confirmed dipsomaniac, too, who had for some time been making spasmodic attempts to take a tumbler of fluid in his wandering hand, suddenly pulled himself together, poured the spirit down his throat, and turning towards him with a comprehensive smile, said in a semi-falsetto voice, that "he thor' the g'nleman shd 'blige hon'rble comp'ny."

The one-eyed man asked for nothing better, and being thus adjured, at once commenced.

"I ain't an Old Colony chap; I'm a Natalian, born and bred. I used to live at Camperdown, near Maritzburg, a place which no doubt you've heard of, if you haven't seen. Well, about the end of October, a matter of two years ago, I had to go up to Maritzburg to see about a new dissel-boom for my waggon. I rode up; I had a very good horse, foaled by one of those mares that Joe Gage had down at Pinetown—mares that every one in Natal knows of, I should think.

"I don't know if you're acquainted with the road between Camperdown and Maritzburg, but I had just crossed the First Spruit, and was trotting easy along, when my horse shied, nearly chucking me; and on looking to see what was up, I saw a black mamba sliding down the hill-slope on my right. Now, the black mamba is about as nasty a snake as you'll find in Natal, and we can show as pretty a collection of those reptiles as you'll get in any country. He ain't like other snakes, what won't trouble you unless you trouble them, by treading on them or frightening them somehow; but he'll go for you, just out of pure wickedness, if you so much as happen to cross the road in front of him. I, of course, knew all about them; but this one was so far off, more'n thirty yards from the road, that I never thought he'd trouble his head about me; so I just cursed the horse a bit, and went on.

"I hadn't gone a rod before the horse began sweating and trembling all over. I thought it must be another snake, but I couldn't see one anywhere on hand, so I turned in the saddle to look at the chap I had just passed. Would you believe it, friends? There he was, not five yards off

in the road, follering along as hard as he could pelt, and with his nose down, picking up the 'spoor' like a hound. I didn't feel frightened—no, not a bit. In fact, why should I? There was I, mounted; and I thought to myself that no snake that was ever hatched could keep up with a horse; so I lifted the nag a bit and trotted out, so as to get clear of the reptile and leave it behind.

"After I had gone about a quarter of a mile I looked round again—I don't know why, for I didn't expect to see anything—when s'help me if there wasn't that snake again, keeping up with me, and p'raps gaining a little. It beat all I had ever heard of; but I wasn't alarmed, not as yet, and I just cantered on, looking round to see what the snake would do.

"The first two or three strides carried me well away from him, and I was just waving my hand to him so as to say, 'So 'long, old man, sorry I can't stop,' you know, when, may I never speak again, if I didn't see that mamba curl his tail up in the air over his head, then twist his neck back, take a grip of his tail with his back teeth, and come trundling alone in the road after me, for all the world just like a child's hoop.

"You can say, without error, that I was startled, in fact considerably so, and I cantered out, still keeping my eye well on the mamba. He went along quite easy, running smoothly like, and it appeared as if he was enjoying the fun and didn't want to hurry himself; only, when any sharp stone, or bit of thorn in the road, seemed to annoy him, he would make a spurt and come on a bit nearer.

"I got round the mountain, and was in the straight bit to Maritzburg, the mamba follering all the way at about the same distance, when I thought that the game was getting played out, and that I might just as well gallop away from him. Accordingly I went on full pelt for about a mile, and then slowed down to give the horse a breather, for the day was powerful hot, when hang me if the mamba didn't suddenly appear out of the cloud of dust we had kicked up, trundling along as happy as ever, only he appeared to be losing temper a bit, having got scratched no doubt through going faster, or p'raps being vexed at having to hurry.

"Friends! I began to feel sick then. I thought really that I should never be able to shake off the infernal thing, and I drove both spurs home and went on again at full

gallop. Still, as fast as I could go, that mamba seemed to go faster. The horse was lathered with foam; the rocks and grass at the road-side seemed to fly past me; but still that cursed black hoop came rolling along about five or six yards behind me.

"I clattered across the bridge outside Maritzburg, and raced up the street. I could see all the people running like mad into their houses, slamming their doors and shutting their down-stairs' windows. They had seen the mamba following me. Some of them went and took seats at the top windows of their houses, so as to have a better view of the hunt, and I thought I heard some of them giving odds on the snake. Up the street I went like a streak of light, and the mamba, having had enough sport no doubt, was now gaining on me every moment, and evidently meaning mischief. I was just passing the Crown Hotel, which, as p'raps you know, stands back a bit from the road, when a chap, amongst a crowd of others who were watching me from the upstairs windows, yelled out, 'Turn a corner sharp, you blamed fool. It's your only chance.'

"Friends! those words were like an inspiration. I just managed to wrench the horse's head round, and to turn down a cross street, and the mamba, seeing he would lose me, straightened himself out; made a leap; and fell short; just bit a few hairs out of the nag's tail, nothing more. I didn't stop till I'd gone a good half mile; and then, seeing no more of the snake, I turned back. Gosh! it makes me hot to think of it now."

We remained silent at the conclusion of this strange story, and the one-eyed digger looked round at us while mopping his forehead, for he had grown warm with the recital. The awkward silence was broken by the dipsomaniac. Raising his head from the liquor-besprinkled and dirty boards which did duty for a counter, he waved his hand graciously towards the digger, and said:

"'Pears to me, to be duty d'volved 'pon me to r'turn thanks of hou'rble comp'ny. Mo' int'resting story—mo' int'resting. Ber you hav'nt said what b'came of ole woman."

We were beginning to breathe again, with a sense of relief from restraint, when the storyteller once more spoke.

"It's a queer yarn, isn't it?" he enquired. "Sounds almost incredible, don't it?"

"Yes, it does—almost," said my partner.

"Still," continued the one-eyed digger, "it's as true as gospel—every word of it. I hope none of you don't think as I've been lying."

"Oh, no—certainly not."

"Because, if so as anyone of you did think so, and would like to put words to it, we can soon see who's the best man outside."

And he began to roll up his shirt-sleeves and expose a pair of brawny, sunburnt arms.

We all believed it to be a stupendous lie; but was it worth while to incur the risk of receiving a couple of black eyes, or perhaps of being reduced to the monocular condition of this romancer, simply for the satisfaction of telling him that we considered him to have been guilty of unmitigated mendacity? No, certainly not. Besides, had not the proverb, or some deceased fogey, said "*Magna est veritas et prævalebit*?" Very well, then; let "*veritas*" manage its own business, and prevail. It was nothing to do with us. So we all agreed as we left the "*Blue Posts*," and went along the dusty road round the base of the "*kopje*" to our tents.

RICH AND FREE!

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

I WAS a whole day at Dover.

I regretted this; regretted losing the morning boat. But I could not see how I could carry out my plan more quickly and as safely. I avoided the great hotel, and went to a small, quiet inn, at which I had once stayed—years ago. Again I kept my room all day, till dusk. I should have forgotten to order any food, had I not been asked what I would take. As it was, I doubt if I ate anything—I can't remember that I did.

I had a fire lighted, and burnt the larger part of the papers and letters I had with me. But I put a pocket-book, containing some of my cards and some notes, of no importance, addressed to me, in the pocket of my travelling cloak. This, which was not black, it was my intention to leave with my hat upon the beach when I should have bought myself another cloak and a widow's bonnet!

My childish and futile plan had not even any originality; I remembered having read of something like it some years back.

About two hours before the steamer in which I had taken my passage was to start, I paid my bill and left the inn—saying that I had a friend to visit in the town. Finding myself too much encumbered with clothing, I left my mantle in a drawer of the room I had occupied. Trifling as that detail was, it much exercised my mind, far more than larger things. Should I give it to the chambermaid? To do that would look strange and cause speculation. Should I just leave it lying, as if I had simply forgotten it? No, it might be seen too soon, someone might start to look for me; so I shut it in an empty drawer.

I thought I knew where the shop I wanted was, but I could not immediately find it, and began to fear I was losing too much time. Then when I found it, how slow the people were, how talkative and inquisitive! But at last I got what I required—required immediately, for a friend, I said—a widow's bonnet with a long crape veil, and a long black cloak which would completely cover me. I took them away, in spite of much remonstrance, and many offers to send them instantly, to any address. Significant glances, or so I fancied, were exchanged among the women in the shop. I fancied, too, I heard a murmur about some "accident."

I made them just pin the bonnet in a paper bag, and the cloak I took upon my arm.

Oh dear! How difficult concealment is! How wonderful it is that crime goes ever undetected! It was now quite dark. The lamps had been some time lighted. Yet I could find no place where there were not people about. I wandered to and fro on the beach, getting feverishly agitated, and always, just as I thought myself safe from observation, came a voice or a step.

At last I drew reckless. It was getting so late. I stopped in the darkest spot I could find, put on the bonnet and changed my cloak; laid my own cloak and my hat among some seaweed, just, as I hoped, above high-water mark, and hurried, only just in time, on board the packet. Safe and free! as I said again and again. It was a rough passage; but though I am generally ill at sea on the slightest provocation, that night I was only roused to a sense of exhilaration by the strife of wind and wave. I remember that I was visited by what I thought an inspiration, a grand idea for a novel, but what it was I have never since been able to recall.

I was almost the last person to leave the boat when we were in Calais harbour; having no luggage to trouble about, I kept my seat till all the rush and bustle were over.

As I stepped on shore I saw, standing just under the light of a lamp, my travelling companion on that long past day of a previous existence. Had I had the presence of mind to pull my black veil over my face, she would not have recognised me. But—I am thankful to say—all presence of mind failed me. I stumbled against an inequality in the plank and should have fallen but for a man's hand which seized my arm and pulled me safe ashore.

"Pulled me safe ashore!" That moment, that incident, constantly recurs to me. For, of course, the man whose grasp had saved me was with her, belonged to her.

"Harold, hadn't we better put her into the train? She has been ill, I expect; she seems faint and giddy. Are you alone? Take my husband's arm; let him help you."

Then, suddenly, she recognised me, in spite of my disguise. There was a solemn, shining significance in her starry eyes as she bent down to me, and said:

"Something dreadful has happened to you. What can we do? In what way can we help you?"

"No, no, nothing has happened. You cannot help me; at least only by forgetting that you have seen me. Just let me lose myself. I beg you, do not look for me—do not look after me—just let me disappear."

I passed quickly from her sight, and hid myself among the throng.

This encounter greatly, and not altogether unpleasantly, disturbed me.

Where was she going, I wondered, when I had, just at the last moment, seated myself in a railway-carriage. I was intending, as far as I had any intention, to go first to Paris, then to Geneva—and then—well—what manner of existence I should be able to plan for myself seemed to me more and more difficult to picture. I had thought of Geneva, because there I had some knowledge of people who might put me in the way of earning a livelihood. But now I remembered that "I" was drowned upon the beach at Dover, and that I must shun, not seek, any former acquaintance.

I put off planning anything beyond Paris. I was too tired, I told myself, to be able to think to any profit.

That encounter had shaken me! And

then the closeness of the railway-carriage sickened me after the freshness of the night air at sea. A deadly exhaustion came upon me, I could struggle no more. Why had I not really done what I wished it to be supposed I had done—just drowned myself? But it could always come to that. And I saw my own figure standing on a bridge under which rushed a mighty torrent of clear, cold, green Alpine water. One spring—and here I lost consciousness, either swooning or falling asleep.

When I came to myself, my fellow-travellers were speaking with considerable excitement (accentuated by the fact that, but for this or that, one or other of them might have been in it!) of a terrible railway accident that had happened in England, accounts of which were filling the papers. What they said made little impression upon me, but I dimly connected it with the looks and words of the women in the Dover shop, where I had bought my widow's bonnet. It occurred to me that they had, perhaps, thought the bonnet was wanted for some one whom that accident had widowed!

By-and-by a lady, next whom I was sitting, offered me one of the papers she had been reading. I received it because I did not like to show so little human interest as to decline it. I began to read listlessly what she pointed to, my mind being very little present with me. But, by-and-by, a little dull excitement was roused by the fact that the collision had been on the line on which we were to have travelled, and on the same evening; though, as far as I could understand, it was not "our train," but a later one which had been wrecked. I returned the paper, with some vague comment. But it was refolded, and given back to me with the words:

"Here are the fuller details, and the list of killed and wounded."

Fuller details, indeed, ghastly details, and a long list of sufferers. Among the list of those "fatally injured," was the name of the man whom I had married on the morning preceding the night of this fearful disaster. As she handed me the paper her finger seemed to point to just that name!

Of course! Why else had she given me the paper? I had a feeling that she must know all about me. But, when I looked towards her, she was taking no heed of me, but talking eagerly to her friends. I pulled down my veil. I leant back my head in my corner; the paper slipped to the floor.

What did I think? What did I feel? Almost nothing, I fancy. Certainly nothing with any sense in it. First came a confused notion that his name there was a mistake, an inaccuracy, as that was certainly not "our train." Then—"you see, you need not have done it. It was going to be done for you"—was a thought which presented itself with some distinctness, to be instantly followed by so strong a consciousness of its almost blasphemous absurdity that I nearly laughed aloud.

I was very slow in grasping the idea, that, in the search for me, he must have lost "our train"—the safe train that, no doubt, had uneventfully reached its destination; that but for me, he would not have been in this fatal train; that, in fact, it was I who had caused his death. When, at last, this was all clear to me, a sudden sense of horror went to my heart, and seemed to stop it.

I fancy consciousness was a good while suspended. When it returned, we were stopping at a station. I was alone in the carriage and the door was open. The wind was blowing freshly in upon me. My fellow-travellers had, doubtless, concluded that I was asleep.

A garçon was offering coffee. Its steam-fragrance made me feel as if a drink of it would be as life to me. And yet I doubted if I could stir my hand to take it, or even open my lips to ask for it.

At that moment *she* was passing by. I have little doubt she was on the look-out for me. She stopped, looked in, hesitated a moment, then stepped in: too much the good Samaritan, too much my guardian angel, to pass me by.

I had managed to throw back my veil; probably my face was ghastly enough; probably my eyes met hers imploringly.

"There is something I can do for you?"

The next minute she was holding the coveted draught to my lips. I inhaled the fragrance of it before I had power to swallow it. She waited beside me, holding the cup for me till it was empty. She paid for it, and then seated herself beside me.

"I cannot leave you like this; you look so terribly changed and ill. Something very dreadful has happened to you, I fear. If I can help you, let me, either with or without telling me what it is. Only," she added, "I know you will not ask me to help you to do anything wrong."

I pointed to the newspaper.

"Someone dear to you killed in that fearful collision?"

"No; oh no."

She had picked up the paper. I pointed to a name.

"That is?" she questioned.

"My husband." I made myself call him that. I had some strange feeling as of making him some slight compensation in calling him that. Compensation to him or penance to myself? I don't know which, or whether it was either—recalling all this confuses me. I must hasten on.

"But," she began perplexedly, "I cannot understand this."

And she touched my widow's bonnet.

"Oh!" I gasped, "I must just tell you all. I was mad, or I could not have married him. I was mad, anyway, directly it was done; and I ran away from him. This was bought for a disguise. He must have lost his train looking for me. That's why he was in this one. That is why he was killed; that is how it is I who killed him."

She turned very white, and her eyes dilated with a sort of horror.

She did not speak directly; then she said:

"He was not killed, you see. It says 'fatally injured.' He is lying in the—Hospital, fatally injured." She paused again, and then: "And now? What will you do now?" she asked me.

"That is what you must tell me."

"That I cannot presume to do. But you must remember he may linger some time, perhaps unconscious, but perhaps conscious. Might it not be to him some solace, some relief, to see you? And to you, afterwards, might it not be some satisfaction to have given him, at such a time, such solace?"

"You mean I must go to him?"

I had known she would make me do this. And yet I was ready to shriek out that this, just this, I could not do; that, even if I had loved him, I could not have done this!

But neither could I have told her of my cowardly repugnance; to be brought in contact with physical suffering; of the horror and disgust produced in me by the very name of a hospital.

"The more painful this is to you the more satisfaction you may afterwards derive from having made the sacrifice," she said with a sort of severe gentleness; and added a moment after: "That, after all, is but a selfish argument. Do you not feel impelled to go to him simply out of compassion for him?"

"No. I cannot do it."

I spoke with slow sullenness, all the time knowing that I had to do it; that I should do it.

I looked up into her face. She had risen and was standing over me; she met my gaze with a steady, almost stern look.

"I think you can do it. I think you will do it! But you must decide quickly. In ten minutes this train will start again. I must speak to my husband. I see him there. I will return to you almost directly. You will have made up your mind."

I had no mind to make up. I had just to do what she required of me. I watched them as they talked. She put one hand on his arm, with the other she had taken hold of the lapel, or of a button, of his coat. She spoke earnestly, pleadingly. He, at first seemed to remonstrate, his face expressing tender tolerance of her vehemence, and some amusement. After a few moments he grew grave, attentive, compliant.

"How those two love each other!" I thought.

He moved quickly away; she came back to me. She did not now get into the carriage, but held her hand out to me. She smiled, and yet her expression was of great solemnity. I took her hand and alighted. She possessed herself of my bag.

"You have decided, I see, to return. We—my husband and I—will go back with you to take care of you, to see you safely over your journey."

"It is all right," he said presently, coming up to her. "All right about our luggage. I have arranged it all. And this lady, you say, has none."

I awoke to some slight sense of the enormity of my selfishness in allowing these two strangers—veritable good Samaritans—to derange their plans and sacrifice their convenience for an unknown lunatic!

My feeble remonstrance was met by her telling me that it was of little consequence; that they were travelling for pleasure; and that they would find their pleasure in being of use to a suffering fellow-creature. As she spoke she tucked my hand under her arm and led me to the waiting-room.

It is curious how some physical sensations linger in the memory. I often recall the inexpressible comfort caused me by the contact of my cold inert hand with her warm body and beating heart. In the waiting-room she put me on a couch and overed me over heedfully. While she was till hovering about me her husband came

to us—a lordly-looking man, of fine presence and commanding air, with a singularly-penetrating eye. I fancied a good deal of likeness between them, and should have judged them brother and sister. But I believe now that the resemblance was entirely in expression, in the souls looking out of them.

"We have forty-five minutes to wait, Hetty. You will come and breakfast with me. This lady can be served where she is." Turning to me he added, "I shall send you a little soup and some wine, and you will be so good as to take what I send you." Oh, the difference of face and voice to me, to her!

"My husband is a doctor, you must know," she explained, feeling, for me, the somewhat stern stateliness of his manner, "and so, of course, he must be obeyed."

Coming back to me about half-an-hour after, she looked at the empty bowl and glass, and nodded her satisfaction.

"That is good and brave of you. My husband will be pleased."

Her way with him was wonderful to me.

"If my King approve you, what more could you desire?" was what her words implied.

Well, I cannot—though one part of me seems to long to do so—go into the details of that strange return journey. I must confess what, perhaps, I ought to be ashamed to remember, that I was, in some hitherto unknown way, singularly happy. I was thought for and cared for by two creatures who belonged to a superior order of intelligence from any I had yet encountered on my life-journey. I seemed to breathe an air more delicate and ethereal than I had ever before inhaled, and to be myself exalted by the distinction with which I was treated.

Till now I had chiefly had to be on my guard and on the defensive in my intercourse with my fellows, often with a sense of my hand against every man's, because every man's was against mine.

The feverishness of the preceding days had burnt out now, and had consumed all my strength with it. I felt as weak as an infant, and I yielded to my weakness. Everything was done for me, thought of for me. I had the delicious rest of being with people whom I could absolutely trust, who seemed to me absolutely good, absolutely wise. I must say, however, that all the tenderness of my treatment was due to her. I felt from

the very first that her husband did not like me, and did not like the intimacy of her kindness to me. Of course he was quite in his right.

Once, in the night, from the bathos of "the swooning sickness on the dismal sea," I came to the surface of consciousness with such an extraordinary sense of mental well-being, as might—so it appeared to me—be a premonition of what is felt by the "happy dead" "waking in the Lord." At least such thoughts, thoughts about such things, come to me when I recall the experience, though, as a rule, "no need for such thoughts yet," has been more my way.

She was holding me in her arms; I was conscious of her warmth and fragrance. The husband was bending over me, his finger on my pulse.

"Great prostration. You must get her to swallow some brandy," were the words that roused me to the actual present, in a sufficiently mundane manner.

That journey was over all too soon for me. They went with me to its very end, to the very threshold, the thought of crossing which was as a nightmare to me. Before they took me to the hospital she got her husband to go there first, while she made me get all possible rest and refreshment at an hotel. It was due to her thought, too, not mine, that I now discarded my widow's bonnet for other head-gear.

When he came back to us he told her—he seldom spoke directly to me, and this, I thought, was one of the signs of his distaste for me—what he had learnt.

"Still alive, generally quite conscious and collected. The injuries being chiefly spinal, there is nothing to shock the eye. He has constantly asked for her. They say this would be a favourable time for an interview. Agitation to be as far as possible avoided, as likely to bring on the paroxysms of suffering which recur at intervals. Can she go now? It is some distance. I have ordered a carriage to the door."

I stood up, saying that I was ready. Not for the world would I have had them know the intense and utter selfishness of the emotion which turned me sick and faint.

When we were there, when they had helped me from the carriage and up some stairs, so frantic a terror was on me that, but for very shame, I should even then have refused to face him. But they never left me till the ward-door had opened and a nurse had led me in.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

AUGUST.

AUGUST is undoubtedly one of the two most pleasant months of the year, when relaxation may be safely sought from the labour of the preceding twelve. It is one of the months of fruit and flowers, and the month of harvest.

By the Romans this month was called *Sextilis*, until the Emperor Augustus, in the year 8 B.C., gave to it his own name, by which it has since been known. The Emperor was not born in this month, but the principal events—the chief triumphs—of his life were achieved in it. He assumed his first consulship of Rome; subdued Egypt; and terminated the civil war in Rome in the month of August; and, following the example of his uncle, Julius, gave to the month his name. Up to this time the month had thirty days; but Augustus, evidently thinking it ought to be one of the long months, took a day from the already shortened month of February, and made it thirty-one. At the same time September and November were each deprived of a day, which were added to October and December. The Saxons called August "Arn," or "Barn Monath," in reference to the filling of their barns with corn. "Arn" is the Saxon word for harvest. It is also stated that the month was called "Woe Monath," as the early Saxons also called it June.

The appearance of shooting stars on August the tenth was observed in the Middle Ages, when they were termed Saint Lawrence's Tears.

August, for all its sunshine and bright golden grain, had but a sorry reputation amongst the ancients, and I find in one calendar two "dies mala," and in another five, pretty well distributed throughout the month. It opens on an unlucky day, and then nothing troubles it until the fifteenth, according to one authority; the nineteenth, according to another. The remaining days (both authorities are agreed as to the nineteenth) are twentieth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth. The second Monday in August is also an unlucky day, the reason assigned being that, on this day, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

With regard to the unlucky days, it is recorded in the Cottonian manuscripts, Vitell., c. viii., p. 20: "Three days there are in the year which we call Egyptian days, that is, in our language dangerous

days, on any occasion whatever to the blood of man or beast. In the month which we call April, the last Monday; and then is the second, at the coming of the month we call August; then is the third, which is the third Monday of the going out (or the last fifteen days of the month) of the month of December. He who on this day reduces blood, be it of man, be it of beast, this we have heard say that, speedily on the first or seventh day, his life will end. Or if his life be longer, so that he will not come to the seventh day; or if he drink some time in these three days, he will end his life; and should he taste goose flesh within forty days' space, his life will be end."

The precious stone set apart for wearing in this month is the cornelian, which, appropriately enough, denotes a contented mind.

Wear a sardonyx, or for thee
No conjugal felicity;
The August born, without this stone,
'Tis said, must live unloved and lone.

So sang a superstitious poet, and no doubt quite as much luck is attendant upon wearing sardonyx in August as upon wearing the cornelian.

Those who are given to grumbling if the month of August be wet, will do well to bear in mind that "a wet August never brings dearth." Though, on the other hand, it is equally certain that

Dry August and warm,
Doth harvest no harm.

We are informed that St. Bartholomew (August the twenty-fourth) "brings the cold dew," and that

All the tears St. Swithin can cry,
St. Bartelmy's mantle wipes dry.

Also that

If Bartelmy's day be fair and clear,
Hope for a prosperous autumn that year.

The first day of the month was always, as the first Monday is now, a feast or holiday, though not always of so popular a character as now. Our forefathers knew the day as "the gule of August," and "Lammas Day."

This was formerly one of the Quarter days of the year. Whitsuntide came first, Lammas next, Martinmas next, and Candlemas last. Some rents are still paid on this day, particularly in Scotland. Formerly on this day our ancestors offered bread made of new wheat, while those tenants who held land of the Cathedral of York were, by tenure, to bring a lamb alive into the Church, which was dedicated to Saint Peter ad Vincula, at High Mass on

this day. Some derive the name from Lamb Mass, because of the foregoing, while others derive it from a supposed tything of lambs at this season. Blount says that it is called "Klaf Mass," that is "Loaf Mass," which signifies a feast of thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth. New wheat is called Lammas wheat. Valency affirms that, in Ireland, La-ith-mas was a day dedicated to the sacrifice of the fruits of the earth. It being pronounced La-ee-mas, the word was easily corrupted into Lammas. The term "gule," applied to the day, is of Egyptian origin, and signifies throat. In the form of "cul" or "gul" it was a Celtic word, signifying a festive anniversary.

Cormac, who was Bishop of Cashel in the tenth century, has left it on record that in his time four great fires were lighted up on the four great festivals of the Druids—February, May, August, and November. In all probability Beltane and Lammas were two of these.

The first of August is also the festal day of Saint Peter ad Vincula, instituted in honour of a relic of St. Peter's chains. It is said that if this sacred relic is kissed on the first of August, any disorder of the throat may be cured. There is a legend that a daughter of the Tribune Quirinus was cured of a troublesome disorder in this simple manner.

The same day is noteworthy through the competition for Doggett's coat and badge, a short account of which may be interesting. In the year after George the First came to the throne, Thomas Doggett, a comedian, who was zealously attached to the House of Hanover, gave a waterman's coat and badge to be rowed for by six Thames watermen on the anniversary of the King's accession to the throne, the first of August. At his death, Doggett bequeathed a certain sum of money, the interest of which was to be appropriated for ever to the purchase of a like coat and badge, to be rowed for in honour of the day. The competition is still kept up.

The following verse was written on a window-pane of a waterside house at Lambeth, during the race on the First of August, 1736:

Tom Doggett, the greatest sly droll in his parts,
In acting was certain a Master of Arts;
A monument left, and no tribute is fuller,
His praise is sung yearly by many a sculler.
Ten thousand years hence, if this world lasts so long,
Tom Doggett will still be the theme of their song.

Until a recent period, the hopping of swans on the River Thames was annually

observed on the first of August. At the close of the last century six wherries were sent as far as Marlow, properly manned, to count and mark the swans. In the present century, however, it became, on the first Monday in August, a festive journey by the citizens as far as Staines, and the trip is termed "swan-hopping," a corruption of swan-upping, or, going up to or taking up the young swans to mark them. The origin of this custom is found in the fact that every swan found in certain portions of the river or sea was claimed as Crown property, the bird being under Kingly patronage, and regarded as Royal. The first Royal decree we find relating to the "upping" is that of Elizabeth, who ordered them to be taken up once a year for the purpose of being marked on the skin of the bill, before the King's swanherd. This consisted of making five nicks, three across the bill and two lengthwise, and afterwards clipping the wings. Swans that were private property, and those belonging to London Companies, were otherwise nicked, and thus gave the names to inns, as, "The Swan with Two Necks," or, as it was originally, "Two Nicks."

Of our own Bank Holiday I need hardly speak, it is so well known, and has so recently been established. Previous to the Act which made the first Monday in August a general holiday, there was no break between Whitsuntide and Christmas.

Passing over nine intervening days we come to the day of Saint Lawrence, the tenth of August. This is a holy day in the Roman Calendar, to commemorate the death of the saint who was martyred under Valentinian, about 373, A.D., by being burnt to death on a gridiron. It is said that while suffering the agonies of burning he turned to his inhuman executioners and asked them to turn him, as the one side was sufficiently roasted. On Saint Lawrence's Day, 1557, the Spaniards gained a decisive victory over their enemies at Saint Quentin, and, in honour of the event, Philip the Second commenced, in 1563, and completed in 1586, the Escorial, the palace of the sovereigns of Spain, at a cost of ten million pounds. It is built in the shape of a gridiron, and the total length of the rooms and apartments exceeds one hundred and twenty English miles. It comprises in itself a church, mausoleum, monastery, palace, library, and museum. It was struck by lightning and caught fire on the first of October, 1872, when great damage was done to the building. The

Church of Saint Lawrence Jewry is dedicated to this saint, and has a gridiron on the steeple for a vane.

On the eleventh day the crusade against dogs ends, dog-days being over.

August the fifteenth is a red-letter day in the Romish calendar, and was formerly a festival in the Church of England, in which calendar it still occupies a place. It was instituted in the year 813 to celebrate the ascension of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven. In Catholic countries there are gorgeous ceremonies and splendid processions on this day.

We pass on now to the twenty-fourth, the Feast of Saint Bartholomew.

This saint, who was one of the Apostles, was martyred about 71, A.D., and his festival was instituted 1130. The day is chiefly remembered through the terrible massacre of the Huguenots, which commenced in Paris on the night of this festival. Sully, the French historian, says that seventy thousand Protestants, including women and children, were murdered throughout the Kingdom of France by secret orders from the weak-minded Charles the Ninth, at the instigation of his mother, Queen Dowager Catherine de' Medici. Above five hundred persons of rank and ten thousand of inferior condition perished in Paris alone. Pope Gregory the Thirteenth ordered a Te Deum to be performed, with other rejoicings. In England, within the recollection of many now living, there used to be a great fair held at Smithfield on this day, called "Bartholomew Fair." The charter was granted by Henry the Second thirty years after the canonisation of Bartholomew. The shows were continued uninterruptedly until 1850, when they were ordered to be discontinued. The fair was proclaimed for the last time in 1855. Not so very long ago there was a prevalent belief that if a sufferer from epilepsy danced all day and all night in the church on the Feast of the Assumption and St. Bartholomew, taking care to fall down as if by accident, and to play a number of other antics, he or she would be cured most thoroughly.

With reference to St. Bartholomew Fair there is a tradition that Rahere, a minstrel of King Henry the First, during a pilgrimage to Rome in 1102, had a vision of St. Bartholomew, and was commanded by him to build, on his return to London, a priory, hospital, and church in Smithfield, or "Smoochfield," then a country spot. Rahere did as he was bidden, and was made

the first Prior of the monastery. It was to this priory that Henry the Second granted the privilege of holding a three days' fair, for the purpose of enabling the clothiers of England and the drapers of London to exhibit their goods. Their booths, which were at first temporary structures, gave place in time to permanent houses, and received the name of Cloth Fair, which name it still retains.

In a legend of the Romish Church, St. Bartholomew is depicted as preaching to natives in the Indies, by whom he is said to have been flayed alive at the instigation of a brother of the King of Armenia. In memory of his death it was customary at monastic institutions, in the Middle Ages, to distribute small knives amongst the people, the knives being credited with the possession of certain virtues.

The last day of August is dedicated in the Romish Calendar to a great Scotch saint, Saint Aidan, who, at the invitation of Oswald, King of Northumbria (Saint Oswald) came from the monastery of Iona to spread the seeds of Christianity where a monk named Cormac had failed. On the arrival of Aidan, "the King appointed him his Episcopal see in the Isle of Lindisfarne as he desired, which place, as the tide flows and ebbs twice a day, is enclosed by the waves of the sea like an island, and again twice in the day when the shore is left dry, becomes contiguous to the land."

Aidan's work prospered greatly for seventeen years, and then, on the thirty-first of August, 651, he died of a broken heart, in a hut at the west end of Bamborough Church. His remains were afterwards removed and placed in Lindisfarne Church, on the right side of the altar.

UNCLE BOB'S NIECE.

By LESLIE KEITH.

Author of "*The Chilcotes*," etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

TILLY was much too healthy a young woman to be kept sleepless by the unfamiliarity of her surroundings, but when she woke, it was from a dream of home among the green silences of Lilliesmuir, and, for a moment, her confused thoughts could not adjust themselves. Then she remembered everything, and, springing out of bed, groped her way to the window. It was still night within, but without a pale, chill dawn struggled feebly with the darkness.

A winter dawn in London carries with it a suggestion of reluctance; it is as if the world were weary and would fain slumber on; in the country there is always the response of bird and beast, a chorus that never omits its greetings; in London, it is the murmur and remonstrance of an overworked multitude; the groan and creak of machinery, the voice of labour and care which rise on the wings of the morning.

Tilly stood at the window till the trees in the square began to show black against the paler atmosphere, and then a sudden resolve possessed her. London was a mystery which still fascinated her; its streets, its people, its endless life and movement, had a haunting charm for her imagination. As yet her explorations had all been made at conventional hours, when the wheels had ceased to creak and everything was in perfect working order; but here was a chance to catch it unawares; to watch the monster stretch its arms, and take off its nightcap, and make its toilet for the day. She made her preparations very quickly, and in a quarter of an hour she was ready. She wrapped herself in a large fur cloak, for, though there was no snow, Christmas was at hand, and the air had a bitter edge.

She took her candle and made her way very softly downstairs. The boarders all slumbered in happy unconsciousness of Tilly's daring project; it was not an early house, as are the boarding-houses where City men do congregate. Madame Drave did not encourage gentlemen of the City, and, in penalty of his profession, the bagman, when at rest from his travels, was compelled to take his morning meal in solitude, and to be content with such fare and unwilling attendance as he could secure.

The other boarders came down about half-past nine, with the exception of little Miss Dicey, who had a tray carried up to her room, so that her morning hours, purged of all distracting elements, might be sacred to literature.

It was thus a house of silence, wrapped in slumber deep as that which hung over Beauty's Palace, through which Tilly crept lightly; the only living thing she met was a black cat, visible at first but as a pair of gleaming eyes. The cat accepted Tilly's caresses with patient dignity, but it refused her invitation to taste the morning air. Cats are unsocial beasts; they have none of the jovial humour that makes a dog a companion always to be relied on, where

adventure is in the wind. So Tilly stepped out alone into the square, still dim with the reluctant, slow-routed night.

The trees hung lean, black arms across the rusty railings which shut in the square garden. In the half-light they looked like hungry, imprisoned eavesdroppers, eager to wrest the secrets from the sleeping houses opposite. They pointed long, skinny fingers at Tilly.

"Look at this girl," they whispered; "who ever saw a girl about at this hour before?"

Tilly began her explorations by walking slowly round the square. She met no one, and her light steps sounded almost loud on the pavement. All the houses were fast-shutterd and shrouded; the night policeman had ceased his prowlings and gone home to bed, and the milkmen were not yet astir. It was very cold, and she quickened her pace.

At the farther side of the square a street branched off, and as it offered a more promising prospect of adventure, she took it. Here, for the first time, signs of life began to greet her. At a corner, where a wide thoroughfare diverged, a coffee-stall was open, and some sons of toil were breakfasting. Tilly paused, with a sudden perception that she was hungry. The coffee smelt good, and the steam of it curled up invitingly in the cold air. She felt in her pocket for her purse, and, finding it, she asked the stall-keeper to serve her too.

Nobody appeared to be astonished; nobody ever is astonished at anybody else in London. The men stared at her, perhaps; but that is the inalienable privilege of the British workman, and she did not mind it; it was a different affair from the staring of the bold clerk in the restaurant of long ago. They drank, and flung down their pence, and shouldered their tools, and went their way; and if Mr. Ruskin and the Society for the Promotion of Beautiful Objects are right, they ought to have carried a new sense of exaltation and refinement with them to the day's toil.

Tilly, too, went her way refreshed and cheered. Before departing, she asked the stall-keeper a question.

"Where can I see the people?" she said.

"What people?" he naturally asked.

"Everybody; anybody. The streets here are very quiet. Are there not other streets where there is more stir and life?"

"If you take the second turning to the left, and the first to the right, and the

second again to the left, you will come to the Brompton Road," he answered; "there is always life enough there."

Tilly obeyed these directions as well as she could, and, though she took a wrong turning here and there, she emerged finally at the desired spot. And here, at last, day met her. The envious night had been vanquished, and a cold, grey light penetrated the street. Behind her the bald front of the Oratory lifted itself unashamed. It claims a foremost place, and does its best to hide the erring parish church, lurking modestly among its graves. Before her stretched the irregular street with an odd blankness of aspect that she had hardly time to realise before it escaped her. For, as if by magic, the day came full-armed, the London day of toil and traffic: covered carts were lumbering already to market; milk-carts were jogging to the squares and crescents; early vendors were extolling their wares.

Tilly might have breakfasted a second time on baked potatoes or roasted chestnuts, and finished up with oranges and apples and sad-looking grapes.

Flowers were offered her by more than one outstretched hand, and, with refreshment for the body and adornment for the person, there was also sustenance for the mind in the shape of the loudly-proclaimed newspaper.

When she had walked for ten minutes, the shops on every side of her were unshutterd; the contents in process of arrangement; the street was no longer blank, it had a very open-eyed and knowing look, and its eastward-moving tide was beginning now to flow steadily. When she turned at last, stepping westward once more, she met it in the face; it seemed to her like the march of an army, this hurry of footsteps, this vision of grave, set faces. It is curious, if one thinks of it, how rarely one meets with a smiling face, and yet there are a thousand things to tickle the humour in every walk one takes abroad.

Tilly had had no particular object to serve in her walk, unless it were to find the shop where she had on that first night unconsciously met her kinsman.

She wanted to bring that old self—that very old, half-forgotten self of two months ago—back again; but she failed to recognise the fateful spot. Perhaps it did not open its doors with the promptitude of its neighbours; perhaps it set itself to entrap the hungry leisure of the home-going clerk rather than to check his hasty outset

towards toil; the fact remains that Tilly found no place that answered to her memories.

She found her cousin, however, which no doubt did quite as well; and she was a great deal less astonished at the meeting than he was, which is rather a surprising statement, considering that he had come this way for the last two months in the faith that he would one day be rewarded by seeing her.

"Why, Cousin John!" she said, gaily, "I was just thinking about you, and here you appear. What a good thing you recognised me, for I should never have picked you out from among all those other black coats and tall hats!"

Any young man might be pleased to hear that a pretty girl had been thinking of him, and John was more than pleased; he was very humbly grateful. She stood smiling up at him with her frank and friendly look, drawing her fur cloak round her pretty shoulders.

"You look as if you had seen a ghost," she remarked.

"I hope not," he said; "because, though I've never met a ghost, I do not think the sight of one would give me any particular pleasure, and——"

"And the sight of me does?" she ended his sentence gaily.

"And the sight of you does; but, all the same, do you think you ought to be walking alone at this hour of day?"

"It appears that I am not to be alone any longer, since you are going with me." She slid her arm into his and he let himself be led away from business, and duty. What cared he, with the touch of her warm fingers on his arm and her laughing glances meeting his?

"Tell me all about it," he said. "Did you come out to post a letter?"

"A letter? Oh, no. I have no one to write to."

"You might write to me," said John, with what he felt to be amazing boldness.

"Well, so I will, when I have anything to say that can't keep. But what is the use of writing when I am going to see you so often? I came out in the dark because I wanted to see the very beginning of the day. I know how it begins in the country, and I wanted to know how it begins here; and I can tell you it isn't half such a good-tempered old world as it is with us. I think London gets up on its wrong side."

"Weren't you afraid?" John asked, not quite liking this recital.

"No, why should I be?" she questioned lightly. She was fearless as Una, because she did not know, or suspect, or question; but he did not quite like it. "I was not afraid, but I was rather cold till I came to a stall wherethey were selling coffee, and I had some, and that warmed me nicely. The cups were very thick, but the coffee was good. I can recommend it to you, Cousin John. Perhaps," she said, looking up at him as he remained silent, "perhaps that is one of the things I ought not to have done? I don't know if you have noticed it, but almost everything here can be summed up under 'don't.' Cousin Spencer used to tell us what we ought to do; but in London the only thing to remember is what should be left undone."

"Well," said John cheerfully, for her tone was a little vexed, and he could not bear to shadow her brightness, "I don't see why you shouldn't breakfast with the horny-handed son of toil if you've a fancy that way, provided always he knows how to appreciate the honour."

"The real working man never is rude," said Tilly shrewdly. "It is when he stops being a working man that he is insufferable. One of them took my cup from me, and another handed across my penny to the stall-keeper, and what could any gentleman do more? I think it would be a very good thing if some girls would go and breakfast with them every day, and then they wouldn't crowd and push and make bad jokes and light their pipes in one's face."

"Better propose it to the unmissioned woman, who is always looking out for a vocation."

"Well, you needn't laugh, sir; it is a very bright idea. By-and-by the ladies might pour out the coffee themselves, and that would be better still. When I had left my working men I found a poor woman who had been sleeping all night on a door-step—think of it, John, in this weather! And a policeman was scolding her and making her get up, just for all the world as if he thought she had been too comfortable. Oh, what a nice feather-bed that door-step must have been! I waited till he had gone, and ran after her and told her about the coffee-stall."

"And how much did you give her, Tilly?"

"Only a shilling. I thought she might as well have the chance of six comfortable breakfasts. For the extra penny you get a large slice of bread, you know."

"I'm afraid she would take her comfort all in a piece, and not in coffee and bread. Oh, Tilly, Tilly, if this is the way you are going to behave, you will have all the London beggars flocking after you. Here's this rogue now, whom I have known for the last dozen years; you see how confidently he holds out his hand when you come in sight?"

"But I am not going to give him anything," she said, passing the pavement artist with a grave, unrelenting look, "and I will tell you why. When I came this way quite early, another man was making the pictures by the light of a lantern. I stood and watched him; and this one, you see, keeps touching them up with a piece of chalk, as if he were the real artist. No," she shook her head, "I cannot encourage Pretence."

"Then you may strike this woman, too, from your list of charities, for, to my certain knowledge, that baby she carries never grows any older. It is always the same age, and it is always crying; and a baby that never grows a day older, Tilly, is as rare a phenomenon as the Flying Dutchman, who could not die."

"Poor, unhappy babies!" said the girl, "what becomes of them when they grow too old to be objects of compassion? Where did they come from, and where do they go to?"

"That is a question very few people about here think of asking; perhaps the answer would be too disagreeable."

"Where are the virtuous, and the happy, and the contented poor, one reads about?" she demanded. "Do they only exist in books? We had no beggars at Lilliesmuir, and I have counted twenty since we met this morning."

"The scum always comes to the top, you know," he answered lightly, anxious not to damp her bright spirits. "The virtuous poor stay at home and work."

"Well, here is a blind man who can't work; there can be no harm in giving to him. We'll make a bargain, Cousin John; we'll draw the line at trade, and at blind people, or people without arms and legs. Selling is an honourable occupation, and buying is a delightful one; there never was anything to buy at home. But since you are such a severe moralist, John, you needn't do anything but look on, and I will choose a button-hole for you to wear in the City. It must be very dull in a bank, so I'll choose violets, because they smell sweet and make you think of the country."

"They will make me think of you, and that will be better still. Will you pin them in their place for me, Tilly?"

"Then you must come home with me. Here is the square. Come and have breakfast with us. Uncle and I are going to have it by ourselves."

"I can't, possibly."

"Not even to see the boarders—our fellow boarders? Not even to be questioned by Mrs. Moxon? Ah, you don't know what a pleasure that is."

"Not even for that felicity." He would have liked very well to go, but they had wandered deviously on their way to the square, talking of the unexplored past which each had to explain, and he was already shamefully late. There were trouble and reproach waiting for him at the bank; but he cared nothing for that—nothing at all; he was growing quite reckless, this dutiful young man, but even for him the line must be drawn somewhere. He drew it at a second breakfast. Perhaps, too, the thought of his uncle came to his aid. There would be no very genial welcome from him. But he walked with Tilly to Yarrow House, and there on the door-step, to the lively wonder and curiosity of Mr. Runciman, who was peeping over the half-blind, she pinned the violets in his coat.

"Good-bye," she said, nodding at him; "and you won't forget to come for me on Saturday?"

"I won't forget," he said, going away with a heart that thumped curiously under the violets. In all his uneventful life he had never felt like this before; but then, perhaps, he had never before met a Tilly.

The trees in the garden seemed still to point to her as she stood on the steps, but now they whispered to each other: "It was a lover she went out to meet." No doubt Mr. Runciman, who was a young man of quick conclusions, thought so too, as he rushed to open the door with a politeness that was possibly tempered with curiosity. It is a little too bad when you have a sly reputation as a breaker of hearts, to find your occupation already forestalled.

There was no escaping the breakfast party, even if Tilly had been minded that way. Honoria flew out upon her from the open dining-room door.

"Where have you been at this hour?" she cried; and she drew Tilly into the dining-room where further greetings awaited her.

Major Drew—his napkin tucked under

his chin—was slicing the ham. It was a matter of private rejoicing among the boarders when Madame Drave breakfasted in her own room. Between this circumstance and the ham there is a closer connection than may appear. On the days when she elected to be present, the ham escaped lightly, but the temper of the household suffered.

Major Draw flourished his wrist gracefully as one delicate shaving after another curled off his knife. Carving was to him one of the fine arts.

"Come away, my dear," cried his jolly wife. "Here is the Major who can make a ham go further than any waiter in London can."

"Matty!" growled the Major.

"You know you can, my dear. He is proud to have a new admirer, Miss Burton, and he'll serve you first. You must be hungry, out so early."

"I am not hungry, thank you," said Tilly. "I had some coffee outside."

"Tilly!" exclaimed Honoria; and Mrs. Moxon looked up from her newspaper with a whole volume of questions in her glance.

"Yes," Tilly looked with laughing eyes at her friend. "Outside—in the street—Honoria, with about twenty working-men for company."

"Alone!" gasped Honoria.

"Alone, certainly. I met my cousin later; if I'd known I was to meet him, I'd have reined in my appetite and waited for him."

"A cousin," murmured Mr. Runciman, twisting the cord of the blind in his restless fingers, and staring at Tilly, "come, that's not so bad, nobody wants a cousin."

There was an odd silence when Tilly's gay voice ceased. Mrs. Moxon, thinking of the Canon, shut her eyes as if she would banish Tilly from her remembrance; Honoria's amaze was undisguised; even Mrs. Drew's motherly face wore an abashed and furtive distress; she blushed under her pink ribbons.

"I suppose," said Tilly, looking slowly from one face to the other, "this is one of the things about which you would say 'don't'?"

"Not at all, my dear young lady," the Major struck in with a too ready briskness,

"a very sensible thing to do. There's nothing like an early walk. Here's Sherrington, now"—he turned to that gentleman, who came in with languor—"would do him all the good in the world."

"Thank you," said Sherrington, with his sweet, sad smile; "I prefer the chill taken off the day." He looked at Tilly with a sort of gentle reproach for her bounding vitality. "My theory is, that people should not meet till one o'clock, at the earliest. But what can one do?" he shrugged his shoulders and looked about him with mournful eyes.

"Faith, you wouldn't find much breakfast here at that hour!" cried the Major.

"I wonder what my uncle would say, if I asked him to wait till midday," said Tilly, going off bravely with a smile. Yet she suffered a strange, forlorn sensation as she went upstairs. They had all been against her—everyone; even young Runciman, who had cried out that he would have liked to be with her—by Jove! wouldn't he just?

"The 'don'ts' are swelling," she said to herself; "when I've learned to remember them all, what will there be left to do?"

On the stair she met Mrs. Sherrington, a hurrying figure, with a half-frightened look in her sleepy eyes.

"Why, Miss Burton, you are energetic!" she cried. "You have been out already?"

"Yes," said Tilly, "I've been out. They will tell you all about it downstairs. I've been breaking one of your many commandments; at home we had only ten, but here you have legion."

"Oh!" Mrs. Sherrington stared. "I'm afraid I must go," she said, settling her cuffs and patting her smooth hair. "I'm so late, and my husband won't eat anything, unless I'm there to make him."

Tilly looked after her with genuine pity.

"Uncle Bob," she said as she entered their sitting-room, "I'm glad to think your appetite doesn't suffer in my absence; and you aren't ready to shiver because you see me with my hat on at this forbidden hour, are you?"

"Come along, my lass," said comfortable Uncle Bob; "I just took a bite to pass the time, and now we'll start fair."